

Anyone who has stood in line at a farmer's market this summer to purchase sweet corn or perhaps a gourmet doughnut can attest to the growing popularity of the "buy local" movement.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture concluded last year that the size of the local food industry is four times larger than previously estimated. When sales of local food to stores and restaurants is included, the USDA said, local food sales amount to more than \$4.8 billion in revenue.

The trend also is strong in Nebraska, where commodity agriculture rules and probably always will.

Some of the local favorites continue to grow. For example, Daniels Produce of Columbus, which sells sweet corn, tomatoes, cucumbers and other vegetables, has expanded to nearly 900 acres near Columbus. This year, Andy and Tannie Daniels are trying a daily stand at 2800 Cornhusker Hwy., Monday through Saturday.

The New York Times took note of the movement in a story earlier this month. In a story titled: "Small Farmers Creating a New Business Model as Agriculture Goes Local," the newspaper reported. "The movement toward local food is creating a vibrant new economic laboratory for American agriculture."

Earlier this year, the USDA launched the "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass," which does dual duty as a report to Congress and a resource for people who want to know more about the local food movement.

"After 20 years of steady and even exponential market growth, local and regional foods are more than a passing trend," the report said. "Consumers are expressing an interest in knowing where their food comes from and in connecting with the men and women who put food on our tables."

The local food movement has been championed in Congress by Rep. Jeff Fortenberry, a

member of the House Agriculture Committee. Fortenberry has sponsored a number of conferences on local foods over the years. Fortenberry told the National Farmers Union convention in Omaha earlier this year that aid to local and organic producers means "job creation and healthy food outcomes."

As the House put together its version of the proposed 2012 farm bill this year, Fortenberry sponsored an amendment to the Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program to give priority to underserved communities, small and mid-sized farms and capacity building for local and regional food systems when requests for federal grants are considered.

The recognition that the local food movement is getting as a contributor to the local economy is overdue.

But, as the consumers who flood into the farmers markets know, the real power of the local food movement is the search for culinary pleasures, like the crunch of a crisp cucumber, or the sensation of a kernel on an ear of corn bursting sweetly against the tongue.

[Click here](#) to read the article on the LJS website.